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26 September 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : SR-71 Status

1. This memorandum is for your information only.

2. Two documents were received from [redacted] relating to the SR-71/OXCART status. These were prepared for use of the ExCom members in preparation for Friday's meeting. One is an SR-71/OXCART comparison. The other is a summary of the SR-71 Category III tests to date.

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3. A very hurried review of the comparison paper suggests that it is objectively done and does acknowledge a two to five thousand foot altitude advantage for the OXCART. It also shows that the SR-71 will cover only half as much area for a given flight track and, thus, would require twice as many missions to obtain equal North Vietnam coverage. It is also clear that the OXCART has a [redacted] over the SR-71. This is primarily because of our use of three independent systems, whereas they will be flying with only a single system.

4. Regarding the status of SR-71 Category III tests, the data is just too sketchy to allow any real judgment on status. During the test period they have flown 82 missions of varying distances and times. Of that number 25 have resulted in aborts, but no data is given as to the reasons for the aborts. Using just those numbers, an airborne reliability of 70 percent would be indicated.

5. The quoted test results on cameras indicates that they will achieve only about half as much resolution as we

[redacted]

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that one of the

[redacted]
of the 82 total flights; and we do not understand why such
a low figure. It could suggest that the camera was not
in condition to be installed for a large percentage of the
flights. Even the primary camera for area coverage was
only flown 52 out of the 82 missions.

6. I would expect, based on the information submitted,
that SAC will state that they will be ready to
assume responsibility for North Vietnam coverage on
1 December. I have doubts as to how effective they will
be, but don't see any way to refute such a claim.

7. I am attaching a more detailed paper on the subject
along with the actual NRO documents.

Carl E. Duckett
Deputy Director
for
Science and Technology

Attachments a/s

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